Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, October 12, 2012

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Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott

1. Providence reading teacher wins 2012 Milken Educator Award

I was very glad to be able to join Mayor Angel Taveras, Dr. Jane Foley of the Milken Family Foundation, and the educators and students at the Lillian Feinstein @ Sackett Elementary School, in Providence, for the presentation of a 2012 Milken Educator Award to Yanaiza Gallant, a Reading Intervention Specialist at the school. As you may know, educators do not apply for the Milken Award – the Milken Family Foundation seeks out the best and most promising educators in the country and surprises the teacher and the school community with an award ceremony.

During her nine years of teaching in the Providence schools, Yanaiza developed a program to bring entering first graders into school in August for early assessment, she started a Science Camp to focus students on academics during the winter break, and she has worked with Inspiring Minds to train 60 volunteers to help students. As Providence Superintendent Sue Lusi noted, "Yanaiza is recognized by both her peers and district leadership as an incredible leader, with a contagious level of energy and enthusiasm, and a gift for developing the skills of her colleagues and students alike. She's become a trusted voice within our community and advocates fearlessly for our students and educators. Her passion for children, education, and social justice is inspiring."

On receiving the award, Yanaiza spoke eloquently about her own school experience, when she was told she did not have the potential to attend college. She told the students who filled the gymnasium for the ceremony that they should always believe in their potential, no matter what discouragement they may encounter. On behalf of RIDE, I

congratulate Yanaiza Gallant. She will truly represent Rhode Island educators well as this year's Milken award winner.

2. RIDE looks ahead to Year 3 of Race to the Top

As we pass the half-way point (the end of Year 2) of our Race to the Top grant, the members of the RIDE staff gathered earlier this week to take stock of accomplishments over the past year and to look ahead to our work during Year 3 of Race to the Top. One of the overwhelming themes that staff members expressed during the meeting was the sense that we have improved our working relationship with you and your colleagues in our LEAs. I hope and believe that you share this view as well.

So far during the course of the grant, we have trained nearly 6,000 educators in transition to the Common Core State Standards, successfully completed our year of gradual statewide implementation of educator evaluations, worked with 24 LEAs on curriculum development, and provided induction for 265 first-year teachers. We have moved forward the development of many data systems and other tools and resources that will drive instruction, including the Instructional Management System, Virtual Learning Math Modules, formative and interim assessments, and the student-growth model. We have moved forward with our Charter School Expansion Grants, and we continue to move ahead with our 9 Collaborative Learning for Outcome LEA groups, which we believe have improved communication, problem solving, and sharing of best practices among LEAs and between LEAs and RIDE.

Year 3 will be a year of implementation rather than a year of design and development. We do not plan to add any new projects during Year 3 of the Race to the Top initiative;

rather, we see Year 3 and Year 4 as the period of time during which we will continue to support you in your work at the district level. We know that all of us will face many issues during implementation – one that came up in our discussions is the use of Student Learning Objectives in evaluations – and we plan to work closely with you to ensure that we use our Race to the Top funds wisely to transform our schools and to advance student achievement for years to come.

3. Educator evaluations to remain private and confidential

RIDE has adopted and approved the following policy statement on the confidentiality of personnel data and records relating to educator evaluations:

Data Access and Management Policy:
Certified Personnel Data

*Preamble***:** This policy is adopted in accordance with the authority of the Rhode Island Board of Regents under R.I.G.L.16-60-4 (1), *inter alia*:

To approve a systematic program of information gathering, processing, and analysis addressed to every aspect of elementary and secondary education in this state especially as that information relates to current and future educational needs so that current needs may be met with reasonable promptness and plans formulated to meet future needs as they arise in the most efficient and economical manner possible.

General Policy: The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is committed to ensuring that personnel data is collected and maintained in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations governing privacy and access to personnel data. This policy statement contains information about the procedures that will be used to ensure the confidentiality of personnel records maintained in RIDE's data repositories. It does not control data stored in data repositories not maintained by RIDE.

Access by RIDE Staff for Data Management Purposes: As with any confidential information in the custody of RIDE, the Department will authorize certain personnel to have access to the data repositories in accordance with current Department policy and practice, and state and federal laws, only if those personnel have a legitimate need to access that information to fulfill their duties as agents of the Commissioner and the Department. Authorizations for access by RIDE personnel and their supervisors shall include approval by agency relevant Chiefs and/or Directors, as well as signed confidentiality agreements from each authorized employee. In addition, authorized users of the data repositories will be required to participate in user training.

Duties of RIDE's Director of Data, Analysis, and Research: The RIDE Director of Data, Analysis, and Research is the designated authority to establish and maintain a system of data protections for RIDE's data repositories in accordance with applicable state and Federal laws governing personnel data and data security. It is the policy of RIDE to ensure that all personnel data in its data repositories are securely

maintained; to provide safeguards for all personally identifiable information; and, to ensure that data is not used for impermissible purposes.

Policy on the Disclosure of Certified Educator Evaluations: The Board of Regents hereby finds that in almost all cases the disclosure of personally identifiable data, evaluations and evaluation results, and similar personally identifiable data for individuals possessing a certificate issued in accordance with Chapter 11 of Title 16, would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and shall therefore not be deemed public, in accordance with the provisions of Rhode Island's Access to Public Records Act. (R.I.G.L.38-2- 1 (A)(1)(b)). The Board further finds that the effectiveness of state and local efforts to improve educator performance through a system of professional evaluations may be made subject to full and effective public evaluation through the full disclosure of evaluation records and associated data in a form which will not lead to the identification of the performance evaluations of individual educators. The Board of Regents and the Rhode Island Department of Education will therefore take the position in any legal proceeding concerning the disclosure of personally identifiable evaluations and associated data that such personally identifiable information and associated data may be properly withheld from disclosure under Rhode Island's Access to Public Records Act.

From RIDE

Instruction

4. **RIDE to host informational webinar on EXCEED RTI**

RIDE will host an informational webinar on EXCEED RTI, one of the components available through the Instructional Management System (IMS). This webinar will serve as an opportunity for district and school leaders to learn more about EXCEED RTI in order to make decisions around implementation. Topics covered will include:

- What is EXCEED RTI?;
- EXCEED RTI features and functionality;
- Why should I use EXCEED RTI?;
- deployment information; and
- resources available.

The webinar will be held on Wednesday, October 31, from 3 – 4 p.m. You can register for the webinar at:

https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/790795678 .

Data Systems

5. RIDE schedules sessions for training on the Instructional Management System

Our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum will be hosting sessions on the Instructional Management System (IMS) for System Administrators in LEAs that are implementing the IMS now or in the near future. These session will be held on Tuesday, **October 30**, from 1 – 4 p.m., at URI Providence (80 Washington St.) in Room 301D, and Monday, **November 5**, from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., at URI Providence (room TBD). Content will focus on Pinnacle Instruction, including assigning roles, curriculum

management, assessment, professional development, and data and reporting.

Please register for these sessions through eRIDE. Participants will not need a laptop or tablet.

6. **LEAs must submit Teacher-Course-Student data daily**

There is confusion in the field about requirements related to the collection of Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data. Please be aware that LEAs are required to submit data for all grades and subjects for all schools on a daily basis. This is true regardless of whether or not an LEA is planning to use the new state Instructional Management System (IMS) this year. TCS data are necessary for other purposes as well, particularly for assigning students to teachers for the purposes of growth calculations. Principals, guidance departments, and district data managers should work closely together to ensure that this information is captured accurately in the student-information system for submission to RIDE.

RIDE has drafted the following FAQs on the TCS data collection:

Teacher Course Student Collection FAQs

Why do districts need to collect TCS data?

Teacher-Course-Student data will improve educational decision-making by connecting teachers with their students accurately in statewide data systems. In particular, TCS data will feed the data platforms that are available to all Rhode Island educators this fall:

- the Instructional Management System (IMS);
- the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS); and
- the Growth Model Visualization (GMV) tool.

These systems *will not work* without TCS data. In addition, as RIDE calculates student growth, TCS data will determine which students' growth will be part of which teachers' performance evaluations.

What data elements are LEAs required to collect and submit through their Student Information Systems (SISs)?

LEAs are required to submit information about:

- teachers - including which sections they teach and for which they are a contributing educator;
- courses - including the subject, grade span, SCED code, etc.;
- course sections; and
- students - including the sections in which they are enrolled.

Detailed specifications can be found here:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/onis/Docs/DataCollections/2012-13/TeacherCourseStudentData_v2-0_Clean.pdf

and

https://www.eride.ri.gov/eRide40/DataDictionary/Default.aspx.

Once initial TCS data entry is complete, what ongoing responsibilities does each LEA have for maintaining and updating TCS data?

LEAs are expected to upload required TCS data on a daily basis, either through Automated Data Transfer (ADT) or through manual submission. As with any data submission, LEAs should work to clear validation errors in an on-going manner.

In addition, LEAs should update TCS data in their Student Information Systems (SISs) in a timely manner, as changes occur. Examples include:

- teachers going on leave: end dates should be entered for the courses that they were teaching; the new teachers or long-term substitutes should then be added as contributing educators and/or teachers of record for those courses, as appropriate;
- changes to courses and course sections; and
- students enrolling or un-enrolling in courses.

7. **RIDE adopts policies on student- and personnel-data confidentiality**

RIDE data repositories include data relating to schools, students, and personnel. Our Director of Data, Analysis, and Research is the designated authority to establish and maintain a system of data protections for RIDE data repositories, in accordance with the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Rhode Island Educational Records

Bill of Rights Act, and other applicable state and federal laws.

RIDE has adopted student and personnel confidentiality policies to ensure that all data in our repositories are securely maintained to provide safeguards for all personally identifiable information and to ensure intended use of data. These policies include RIDE responsibilities for the security of data and the restricted access protocols for all RIDE employees.

Student and Personnel data confidentiality policies are available at:

- http://www.ride.ri.gov.DataWorks/documents/EducatorDataPolicy.pdf
- http://www.ride.ri.gov/DataWorks/documents/EmployeeConfidentialityAgreement.pdf
- http://www.ride.ri.gov.DataWorks/documents/StudentDataPolicy.pdf

Please contact Michael Ferry, at 222-8258 or michael.ferry@ride.ri.gov, if you have questions or would like guidance developing a local confidentiality policy.

Standards and Assessments

8. RIDE releases update on transition to the Common Core, Comprehensive Assessment System

We are pleased to announce the release of a Quarterly Update Memo sharing the highlights of the past quarter and looking ahead to next quarter for the Transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and for the

Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS). Some highlights include:

- close to two-dozen resources were posted to our website this quarter. See: www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/CommonCoreMaterials.aspx ;
- professional development on Critical Areas of Focus within the CCSS will be offered during the current school year;
- the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Collge and Careers (PARCC) is moving forward with its Educator Leader Cadre, an update to the Model Content Frameworks, and with the release of item and task prototypes;
- formative-assessment professional development has launched its first module on the Instructional Management System (IMS) and has provided additional support documentation on its website;
- The Interim Assessments System has also launched via the IMS, and LEAs that will be implementing the assessments are learning the system and preparing for testing next month; and
- Data-use professional development conducted its three-day intensive institutes for participating LEAs and is moving forward with preparations to launch Day 4 trainings.

The memo can be viewed online, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/DOCS/QuarterlyUpdates/FY13-Q1_CAS-CCSS_Quarterly_Memo.pdf.

Please visit our website for more resources, at:

www.ride.ri.gov/Division-EEIE/transition.aspx!

Legal

9. Decision on discovery posted

Our Legal Office has posted this decision on pre-hearing discovery regarding the dismissal of a tenured teacher in Providence:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/DOCS/2012/017-12_Jane_Bamberg_vs._P.S.B._101212.pdf

Educator Evaluations

10. **Framework for Teaching Proficiency System (FFTPS) to provide sub-skills reports**

As of today (October 12), all FFTPS users will have access to a sub-skills report upon completion of their Proficiency Test. The new sub-skills report will provide differentiated user feedback and recommendations for next steps. The feedback will be based upon test performance, and both individuals who completed their Proficiency Test prior to today and new test completers will be able to log in and access their sub-skills report. This new FFTPS feature was a direct result of feedback from Rhode Island evaluators, and we are excited to share this improvement.

11. Student Learning Objective workshop PowerPoint available on RIDE website

On September 25 and October 2, RIDE held Student Learning Objective Peer Review and Support Sessions for educators across the state. This was an opportunity for educators to review their Student Learning Objectives, to hone their ability to determine if the three main criteria were approvable or needed revision, and to craft feedback. For educators who were unable to attend the in-person workshops, a narrated PowerPoint that replicates the experience is now available.

The narrated PowerPoint can be utilized as a facilitation device in a department, grade-level, or staff meeting, in which all members bring a complete draft of their Student Learning Objective to share and receive feedback from colleagues. It can also be used for leadership-team members to calibrate the feedback they give to teachers.

Educators can access the narrated PowerPoint on the RIDE website at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx.

Diploma System

12. RIDE produces flyers about graduation requirements, diploma system

RIDE has created one-page flyers with information for students, parents, and teachers about the graduation

requirements and the supports available to help students to meet those requirements.

In our continued effort to provide LEAs with communication tools, we have produced several flyers that are targeted for specific audiences: students, parents, and teachers. These flyers can be reproduced as full-size flyers or as postcard size. LEAs and schools are encouraged to print the flyers with local messages or information on the reverse side.

We will continue to provide materials that will support you and your staff as you have discussions with students, families, and educators about the graduation requirements. Included in each flyer are summaries of the opportunities students have to meet the state assessment requirement. For more details about any of the requirements and supports, please see out website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/Secondary/sec_regs.aspx#Secondary_Regulation_Guidance.

The flyers are available at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/omp/secondary/default.aspx.

From other organizations

13. Organization to award $5,000 grant to educator who stands up to injustice, seeks nominations

The international nonprofit organization Facing History and Ourselves has launched a campaign to recognize outstanding educators whose ingenuity, determination, and passion teach students, parents, and colleagues not to stand

by, but to stand up and speak out in the face of injustice. The best educators create environments that help us learn to stand against injustice and take responsibility for each other. These teachers, administrators, coaches, and mentors are Upstanders, and Facing History and Ourselves wants to help you honor each and every one who has touched your life and given you the tools to become an Upstander yourself.

Nominations may be submitted by any person 13 or older who has been inspired by a teacher, administrator, coach, or staff member and will be accepted until **October 22**.

From those nominations, Facing History will select 20 semifinalists, and then encourage members from the community to vote on the most inspiring educator. The educator who receives the most votes will be honored with a $5,000 grant to help them continue their work as an Upstander.

To nominate an Upstander, [click here](#).

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

    http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx